

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LETTER TO FOREIGN MINISTER TALBOYS

1. THERE FOLLOWS TEXT OF LETTER TO FOREIGN MINISTER
TALBOYS WITH MY THOUGHTS ON THE CURRENT STATE U.S.-
VIETNAMESE RELATIONS. I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR PASSING TEXT
TO TALBOYS ON MY BEHALF. SIGNED ORIGINAL BEING POUCHED:

2. BEGIN TEXT:

"DEAR BRIAN:

IN VIEW OF VICE FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN'S COMING VISIT
TO NEW ZEALAND, I WANTED TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PASS
ON SOME THOUGHTS ON WHERE US-SRV RELATIONS NOW STAND, IN
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THE HOPE YOU WILL FIND THEM USEFUL.

DURING RECENT WEEKS WE HAVE RECEIVED A NUMBER OF INDICATIONS
THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARE INTERESTED IN RESUMING THE NORMALI-
ZATION PROCESS. SHORTLY AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE
HUMPHREY-HUNG ESPIONAGE TRIAL, THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNICATED
TO US THEIR DESIRE TO RESCHEDULE A VISIT BY THEIR EXPERTS

TO OUR MIA IDENTIFICATION FACILITIES IN HAWAII. THE VISIT, WHICH JUST ENDED, WENT VERY SMOOTHLY. THE VIETNAMESE DELEGATION CONVEYED THE SENSE THAT HANOI DOES INDEED PLAN TO PROVIDE TANGIBLE PROGRESS ON MIA'S. PUBLICLY, THEY ALSO AVOIDED LINKING THE MIA ISSUE TO THE LARGER QUESTION OF NORMALIZATION AND CONCENTRATED ON TECHNICAL MATTERS, AS HAD BEEN AGREED.

IN THEIR APPROACH ON RESCHEDULING THE HAWAII VISIT, THE VIETNAMESE SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY OF A MEETING BETWEEN VICE FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYENCO THACH AND MYSELF DURING THE LATER HALF OF THIS MONTH IN EUROPE. WE TOLD THE VIETNAMESE THAT I WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO MEET THACH IN EUROPE, BUT THAT I HOPED TO SEE HIM IN SEPTEMBER IN NEW YORK DURING THE UNGA. WE REITERATED THIS IN HAWAII TO THE SRV DELEGATION LEADER.

THE VIETNAMESE HAVE ALSO ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO ALLOW THE DEPARTURE OF FIFTEEN U.S. CITIZEN CHILDREN, ALONG WITH THEIR MOTHERS, TO REJOIN RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME HANOI HAS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW INDIVIDUALS TO DEPART DIRECTLY FOR THE UNITED STATES IN ORDER TO BE REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES.

WE ASSUME THAT THE CHANGING VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE TOWARD
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THE U.S. HAS BEEN HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY THE DETERIORATION IN RECENT WEEKS OF SINO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS, INCLUDING THE CONTINUATION OF THE CAMBODIAN VIETNAMESE CONFLICT. NEGOTIATIONS NOW UNDER WAY IN HANOI OVER HOW TO CARRY OUT THE EVACUATION OF "PERSECUTED CHINESE RESIDENTS" SEEM TO BE DEADLOCKED, AND PEKING APPEARS INTENT ON USING THIS ISSUE TO DEMONSTRATE ITS EXTREME DISPLEASURE OVER HANOI'S TIES WITH MOSCOW. IN ADDITION TO THE RECENT DECISION TO TERMINATE ALL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO HANOI, RECENT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS INDICATE PEKING IS STEPPING UP SUPPORT FOR PHNOM PENH AND NOW MAY HAVE MORE THAN 6000 "ADVISORS" IN CAMBODIA. THE VIETNAMESE DELEGATION IN HAWAII DID NOT HIDE THEIR CONCERN OVER CHINESE ACTIONS.

OUR POSITION ON NORMALIZATION, SET FORTH DURING OUR THREE ROUNDS OF TALKS WITH THE VIETNAMESE IN PARIS, IS THAT BOTH SIDES AGREE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS AND EXCHANGE EMBASSIES AND AMBASSADORS, AT WHICH TIME WE WOULD LIFT THE TRADE EMBARGO. DURING THE THIRD AND MOST RECENT ROUND IN PARIS IN DECEMBER 1977, PHAN HIEN PROPOSED ESTABLISHING TRADE RELATIONS AS AN "INTERIM" STEP TOWARD

FULL NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. HE CONSIDERED THE PROSPECTS FOR ESTABLISHING FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BLOCKED FOR THE TIME BEING IN VIEW OF CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN OVER EVEN INDIRECT AID THROUGH INTERNATIONAL

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS. IMPLICIT IN HIS PROPOSAL WAS THAT AN EXCHANGE OF TRADE OFFICES AND A LIFTING OF THE TRADE EMBARGO WOULD BE PART OF THE PACKAGE. IN RESPONSE TO PHAN HIEN'S PROPOSAL, I OFFERED TO EXCHANGE INTEREST SECTIONS WITHOUT LIFTING THE TRADE EMBARGO BUT NOTED THAT THE UNITED STATES CONSIDERS TRADE TO BE AN ASPECT OF NORMAL RELATIONS AND THAT TRADE AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS MUST GO TOGETHER. PHAN HIEN OF COURSE DID NOT ACCEPT THIS OFFER. OUR IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE VIETNAMESE
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HOPED TO BRING US AROUND EVENTUALLY TO ACCEPTANCE OF SOME SORT OF "INTERIM SOLUTION" THAT WOULD INCLUDE TRADE RELATIONS, BUT WHICH WOULD FALL SHORT OF FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

SINCE THE DECEMBER ROUND OF TALKS WE HAVE TAKEN SEVERAL STEPS TO DEMONSTRATE OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE HAVE LIBERALIZED REGULATIONS TO ALLOW INDIVIDUAL PERSONS IN THE UNITED STATES TO REMIT MONEY DIRECTLY TO RELATIVES IN VIETNAM. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE QUIETLY ENCOURAGED THE EXPANSION OF PRIVATE SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM. AS A RESULT, TWO NOTED VIETNAMESE SCIENTISTS, DR. NGUYEN VAN HIEU AND DR. TON THAT TUNG, WILL LIKELY VISIT THE U.S. SOON TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION WITH THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE SUPPORTED THE PRIVATE DONATION OF LASER MACHINERY FOR USE IN CANCER TREATMENT AT THE BACH MAI HOSPITAL IN HANOI.

PHAN HIEN'S RECENT STATEMENTS IN TOKYO AND CANBERRA REGARDING THE PROSPECTS FOR NORMALIZED U.S.-SRV RELATIONS HAVE OF COURSE RECEIVED A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION HERE. HIEN'S REMARKS CERTAINLY BREAK NEW GROUND AND, IN SO DOING, SUGGEST THAT THE VIETNAMESE MAY BE MOVING TOWARD AGREEING TO NORMALIZATION, WHILE RESERVING THEIR POSITION TO CONTINUE TO DEMAND U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. SUCH AN ANALYSIS WOULD COINCIDE WITH ACCOUNTS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM JAPANESE AND AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS ON THEIR CONVERSATIONS WITH PHAN HIEN.

I HOPE THESE OBSERVATIONS WILL BE HELPFUL AS BACKGROUND FOR YOUR CONVERSATIONS WITH PHAN HIEN. ONCE HIS VISIT
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IS CONCLUDED, I WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATIVE IF YOU COULD
GIVE ME YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF HOW THE VIETNAMESE VIEW
NORMALIZATION DEVELOPING IN THE MONTHS TO COME. I AM
CERTAIN YOU APPRECIATE THE CARE WITH WHICH WE MUST CONSI-
DER OUR POSITION ON THIS SENSITIVE ISSUE; GIVEN THE
REGIONAL AND INTERNAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS INVOLVED.
SINCERELY, RICHARD HOLBROOKE" END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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